

Climate change is not gender neutral

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No. 3, 6 March 2020

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Different impacts of climate change on gender

Climate change affects all people - but not all people equally. Gender impacts vary due to factors such as the division of labour marked by gender norms and traditional role models, unequal distribution of resources and rights. In many cases, existing gender differences are further accentuated by climate change. Contextual and intersectional factors such as interactions with age, social class, ethnic/religious affiliation and others - always play a role:

- Climate change is affecting agricultural productivity in many regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women account for 80% of agricultural production and are thus particularly affected by drought and desertification.
- Climate change affects the availability of drinking water. This not only makes it more difficult to obtain water, but will also have a negative impact on the health situation (through greater reliance on unsafe water sources). Water procurement and health care - often traditional tasks of women and girls - will therefore take even more time than today.
- The links between climate-induced drought disasters and increased sexualised violence, forced marriages and maternal mortality are also well established.
- Climate change increases migration pressure. Men frequently have to leave their families to seek often precarious jobs in other

places to secure subsistence for their families. Women mostly stay behind, have to take responsibility for the family and local subsistence, and are often exposed to stigmatisation and security risks.

More systematic consideration of gender-specific needs ...

While experts draw attention to these gender aspects and the UNFCCC has its own working strand on gender and climate, these differences have so far been insufficiently reflected in climate analyses and policy. As a result, gender-specific needs are hardly addressed, existing structural disadvantages may be increased unintentionally, and existing potential for promoting gender justice in the context of climate mitigation and adaptation measures is hardly used. Examples are:

- Where traditionally it is mainly men who own the land rights - even if it is their wives and daughters who cultivate the land - experience shows that women hardly benefit from compensation payments in the event of climate-induced crop failures.
- If traditional gender roles and division of labour are not taken into account, income-generating measures offered as compensation for climate damage are less effective or may even have negative effects on gender relations.
- On the other hand, positive effects can be expected if gender-specific mobility needs are addressed through gender-sensitive planning

of transport routes and means of transport when switching to more climate-friendly transport.

- Social security systems can be an important element in mitigating negative climate impacts. Here, too, it is important to take gender-relevant aspects into account, for example in health services or care and support services in the family, in order to strengthen resilience and also reduce existing inequalities.

... and better use of the knowledge and potential of women

Especially in traditional societies, women and men have different knowledge and experience. The knowledge that women possess about environmental conditions such as local species, ecological pesticides and fertilizers, or post-harvest processing is often hardly used. Yet it is a key resource for advancing mitigation and adaptation strategies. It has been shown that forestry projects in India in which women were involved had a 28% greater chance of forest regeneration.

Studies show that decisions and actions concerning the use of resources are more in line with climate protection and focus more on the common good and not only the individual benefit of climate measures when they are taken through mechanisms and processes in which women and men are actively involved. Where the participation of women is restricted due to structural inequalities, climate protection and equality can be strengthened through empowerment approaches. ■